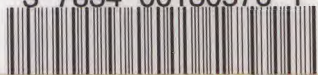


MATAWAN ABERDEEN

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Matawan Memories

Word Pictures

by

Genevieve Donnell



Maiden Lane, Matawan, New Jersey

Circa 1850

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Barbara D. Bradley
and Susanne D. Miller

Published by Barbara D. Bradley and
Susanne D. Miller who gratefully ac-
knowledge the kindness of David Thaler,
Editor of The Bayshore Independent, for
his advice, and John Cronin for his
charcoal illustrations.

Published June, 1975

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room

Matawan Memories

Word Pictures

by

Genevieve Donnell

This book is dedicated to the memory of Genevieve Donnell, whose love for Matawan is expressed in these stories, written by her, and published in The Bayshore Independent in 1973 and 1974.



Does the autumn foliage seem more colorful and gay this year because I'm growing old and realize that this may be the last time I can enjoy this beauty?

Whatever the reason, I'm thankful I can see this splendor as I walk up Main Street. Several houses have been painted in muted colonial colors and the contrast of the rich gold and orange leaves against this background is a joy to behold.

There is no need to travel to Vermont or New Hampshire - right here in Matawan we can boast of fall foliage equal to that of the New England states. The many outlying developments haven't completely hidden the wooded hills, so we are surrounded by the beauty of the oaks and maples. The lakes reflect the crimson sumach and golden birches as they bend over to admire their own beauty.

Pause a minute, brother, and think, isn't it fine to live in this enchanted area? I, for one, am glad to be here.

Date unknown

Maiden Lane: Short Street with Long History

Right in the center of the business district of Matawan is a small street which I'm sure most people believe to be just the entrance to Foodtown's parking lot. But if you look, you'll see a small sign stating this is Maiden Lane.

I always call this little strip of land "my lane", because here I have lived for 75 years, and my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents before that.

At one period, the lane was a narrow road extending from Main Street down the hill to the creek, where a small dock was built. Some of the piling still remains under the mud and the growth of weeds and bushes.

The creek at that time was navigable up as far as Buttonwood Manor. Guests from the Matawan House, a hotel on Main Street where the Central Jersey Bank building now stands, would trip daintily down the lane and splash around in the creek or take a short ride in the row boats tied at the dock. After the railroad trestle was built, boats no longer sailed up the creek, so gradually the growth of the meadow filled up the stream and rains washed out the road. Trees and shrubs covered the hill, and the wide

stream became a narrow creek, although the tides still rise and fall. The overgrowth completely covered the road and today, although the tax map shows a road extending to the creek, it would be impossible to even walk down the hill.

So the narrow road called Maiden Lane became just a footpath, and grass grew abundantly on each side. At the time of my childhood, there were four houses fronting on the lane. On the right, a small house behind the corner barber shop, then a vacant lot and a barn. The last house faced Main Street and was the home of my grandparents. It had been purchased from a Capt. Disbrow, a relative of my grandmother. Almost every man who owned any kind of a boat was called captain and I think Matawan had more captains than boats.

On the left side was a small house surrounded by tall lilac bushes. Here my great-grandfather raised his six children. His name was Denyse and he married Mary Disbrow, so you see the name Disbrow is well known in these parts. Donald Sterner, well known throughout the county, is one of the Disbrow descendants.



My grandmother told me many tales of her life as a child, and one of the most amusing is about the family gathering around the fireplace in the evening to get ready for bed. Bricks would be heated if the weather was very cold, and as there was no inside stairway, the children would rush up the outside steps to the small sleeping quarters, hugging their blankets and bricks. After my grandfather married my grandmother, he bought this building and installed a cutting machine and bins which he used in his business as a cigar maker. Years later, when we tore the house down, we were amazed at the workmanship. Hand-hewn beams were used for the main structure, but the walls were thinly plastered over bricks and wooden lathe. The peculiar part was that the plaster was mixed with sweet hay. I have always regretted demolishing this building. It was an example of true Revolutionary architecture.

The Disbrow home which my grandfather Van Brackle purchased was a long two-story building. One pleasant feature was a bay window in the center, flanked by a narrow porch. My grandmother had the proverbial green thumb and even in the winter that bay window was a riot of color—geraniums, petunias; she could make anything grow. The large strip of grass in front of the house was a deep lush green and was shaded by cherry and apple trees. Because there were no lawnmowers at that time, we used large scissors and a sickle to keep the grass from becoming a forest. Large round beds of yellow and red tulips welcomed the spring and the lilies-of-the-valley sent their bridal fragrance out into the cool evening air. Purple wisteria overhanging the porch and the lilacs added their sweetness. The huge cherry tree by the side of the house raised beautiful white blossoms to the spring sky, and the pink apple blooms held the promise of luscious fruit come fall.

Somewhere in his travels, my grandfather had picked up an iron fence, very ornamental, and this enclosed the yard. We planted red and pink rambler roses

beside it and in a few years the beautiful blooms gladdened the eyes of all who came down the lane. From the first crocus and daffydil to the last chrysanthemum, there was always an abundance of flowers. Pansies' smiling faces looked up to the flamboyant red poppies, sweet william flirted with the blue-eyed larkspur. Orioles built their nests in the weeping willow trees near the creek, and squirrels gathered the walnuts from the four large trees.

It was fun to climb the large cherry tree and pick the juicy sour fruit. The waxy ivory pear blossoms never developed into very tasty fruit, but they were beautiful for the week they bloomed. In June, the old-fashioned pink rose we so seldom see now put forth its best efforts to send its never-to-be-forgotten fragrance out into the soft summer air.

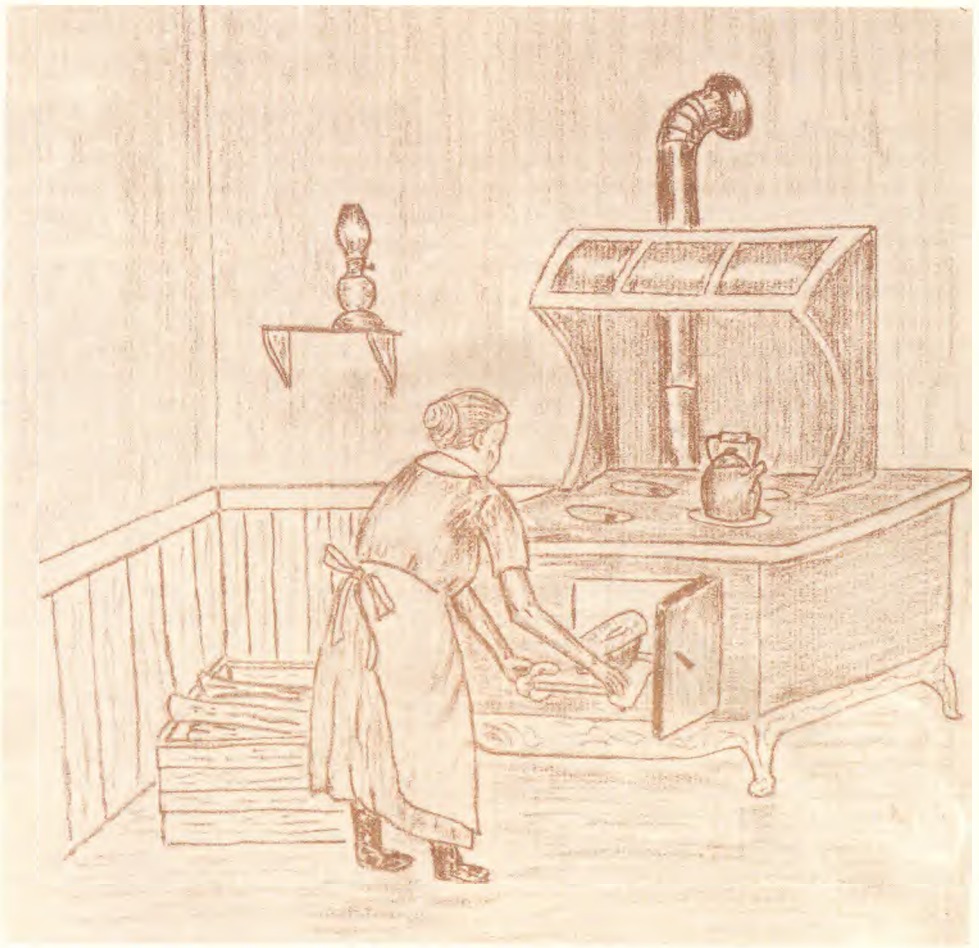
The beauty of Maiden Lane is only a memory now. Black top has taken the place of the soft green grass, the old houses are all gone. I still live here, it is still "my lane" and I can close my eyes and remember its former simple beauty, and maybe on a summer evening catch the scent of the roses.

Published February 27, 1974

A Day at the Old Ball Game

World Series days are the time when all good baseball fans stand up to be counted. There's nothing that can match the enthusiasm of baseball fans, and Matawan has always been noted for its interest in America's favorite sport.

About the year 1900, we were all proud of the grandstand erected on Church Street, just about where the elementary school now stands. I suppose it was not too large, but to my childish eyes it was huge. When we sat in the top row of hard wooden planks, we felt we were close to heaven. Matawan boasted a fine team and the air was filled with cheers and applause at every game. Even the ladies, dressed in their frilly muslins and lace hats, forgot their dignity and waved their



parasols and shouted whenever the umpire displeased them. The rivalry between Matawan and Keyport was keen so the grandstand and bleachers were always crowded when these two teams played.

Before the trolley cars became the transportation, the players and fans used stagecoaches and horses and buggies to carry them to the games. And after the games, the trolleys were filled to overflowing with happy victors or sad losers.

Lemonade was the drink of those days and on special occasions peanut vendors wandered through the crowds. Sounds corny, doesn't it? But baseball was just as exciting in those days as it is today and from the sandlots of the small towns some of our finest players emerged. The hundreds of boys and girls who are

members of Little League teams are carrying on the tradition of good baseball in Matawan.

Published October 3, 1973

Fond Memories of the Scenes of Long - Ago Childhood

"How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood," is an old song, but how true. We remember with affection such simple things as penny candy, train rides, the too-seldom visits to the beach, but one thing I recall with pleasure is the pot-bellied stove and the coal-burning kitchen range.

Today, the pot-bellied stoves are sold in antique shops, painted and decorated and used as planters, lamp stands, or tables. But I remember the wonderful warmth,

the wood crackling or the coals glowing when we came in, cold and tired after skating or sledding.

There was also a huge stove in Trinity Church, and as there was no janitor service in those days, we all took turns stoking the fire and emptying the ashes. The members of the congregation sitting in the front row were toasted, but the poor fellow in the back shivered.

The old cooking stove was a joy. On cold winter nights when we came in wet from plowing through the snow or rain, we would cuddle down in front of the open oven, stretch our frozen feet out into the warmth of the interior and study our homework. My grandmother always made her own bread in this oven, and I can still remember the smell and taste as she gave me a slice of the brown crust. The chimneys of these stoves extended through the upstairs bedrooms and gave us a small amount of heat.

In those days, we used oil lamps. No turning on switches for instant light. The lamps were filled with kerosene each day, wicks trimmed and chimneys washed and polished. The stoves were cleaned and polished, coal carried in and ashes carried out. If we wanted to be warm we had to work for it. The same applied to the lights; if we wanted to read at night, we had to clean the lamps.

The "Rayo" lamp on the dining room table where we did our homework spread a soft glow on our books and somehow doing homework didn't seem too much of a chore.

When we "oldtimers" are asked, "Were you ever bored?", the answer is, "We never had time to be bored." We worked and played and enjoyed the simple life. If we had to go anywhere, we walked, and we never missed the beauties of the wild flowers, birds, etc. as we wandered the roads. At today's speed, many of the beauties of nature are never seen. I don't envy the youth of today with all the modern inventions and pleasures. We enjoyed the gifts of nature and never worried about ulcers.

The Santa Who Knew How to Talk to Children

About the year 1940, the merchants of Matawan organized a group known as the Matawan Merchants Association. The exodus from the cities to the country had not yet begun, and Matawan was still a small village.

Herbert Gittins was elected president of the organization and plans to create a little activity were made. At Halloween, we promoted a parade, awarding prizes and bags of refreshments. At Easter time we had Bugs Bunny visit the children and lead a parade up Main Street to the school grounds, where we had hidden hundreds of painted eggs.

Then came the big day, Christmas! We dressed up F. Howard Lloyd in a velvet Santa suit which I think we borrowed from the First Aid Squad. What fun we had, in the rear of The Friendly Shop, making Mr. Lloyd into a fat Santa with pillows. He was the perfect Santa. He was a retired professor and knew just how to talk to the children. We decorated a small shop, now demolished, at the corner of Little and Main Streets and made it Santa's headquarters.

Mr. Lloyd loved children and they in turn loved him, so there was no generation gap in their discussions. The little ones climbed up on his knee and whispered in his ear their heart's desires. He in turn whispered to them, no loud ho-ho-ho's, just a heart-to-heart talk. It was a joy to see the happy faces of these youngsters, as they gave Santa a sticky kiss or shook hands with him, leaving the remains of a candy cane in his palm.

The first small organization of business people later became the present Chamber of Commerce, but the real pleasure was working together, filling bags, coloring eggs, and wrapping Santa's gifts. Sometimes we get so big we forget the little things of life that bring real happiness. The Recreation Commission now does a wonderful job of bringing Santa to visit the children and they are to be commended. But we oldtimers and the children who are now grown up with families of their own will never forget Mr. Lloyd or the kind Santa who knew how to talk to children.

When American Legion Hall Served as School

I wonder how many people in Matawan know that the American Legion Hall was once a school.

The first floor of the building was occupied by stores, but the large room upstairs was divided and here the kindergarten and first-grade pupils attended classes. The large stairway was at the rear of the building, and it's a tribute to the watchful teachers that no one fell down those steps. I believe Charles Geran owned the building, and it was called Geran's Hall. After the grammar school on Broad Street was enlarged, the hall was used as it is now for dances and entertainments.

Miss Bloomer was the kindergarten teacher, and a very dear little lady, Miss Mary Mack, was in charge of the first grade. How well we remember our first teachers! Miss Mack reminded me of a chirping little blackbird, curly black hair and snappy dark eyes. She was a good disciplinarian but her smile was sweet and loving and the children adored her. Twenty years after attending that school, I had the pleasure of entertaining Miss Mack in my home. She hadn't changed one bit—just as snappy and full of life.

When we passed on to the second grade we attended the Broad Street School. There were four rooms on the first floor,

a very wide, long hall and four rooms on the second floor. There was no plumbing system in the school so we used outside toilets, and even wooden seats are pretty cold in the wintertime.

Special programs were held in the large hall and at the end of each day all the classes marched out while a teacher or older pupil played the huge square piano. Eventually, a large addition was built on the school, so from then on the children had a good auditorium for their programs. The outside toilets were torn down and more modern and sanitary facilities built in the basement. The wooden stairs which had been such a fire hazard were replaced with concrete steps. In 1913, the grammar school graduating class numbered 34, the largest group to complete the grades. It was a memorable day, flowers and gifts and a fine program prepared under the direction of Mrs. Gittins, the eighth-grade teacher. It was a wonderful occasion and the only graduation exercises many of us ever had. We were not able to attend high school because we had to help at home by obtaining work. Only about 10 members of that class are still living.

That school has been demolished and several others built throughout the borough and township, but memory sheds a rosy glow on the old school days.

Published March 13, 1974



Hotels Once Populated

Matawan's Main Street

In a booklet just released by the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders, emphasis is placed on the importance of the inns of the Revolutionary period. This brought to my mind the several large and small inns, or hotels as we called them, of the early 1900's.

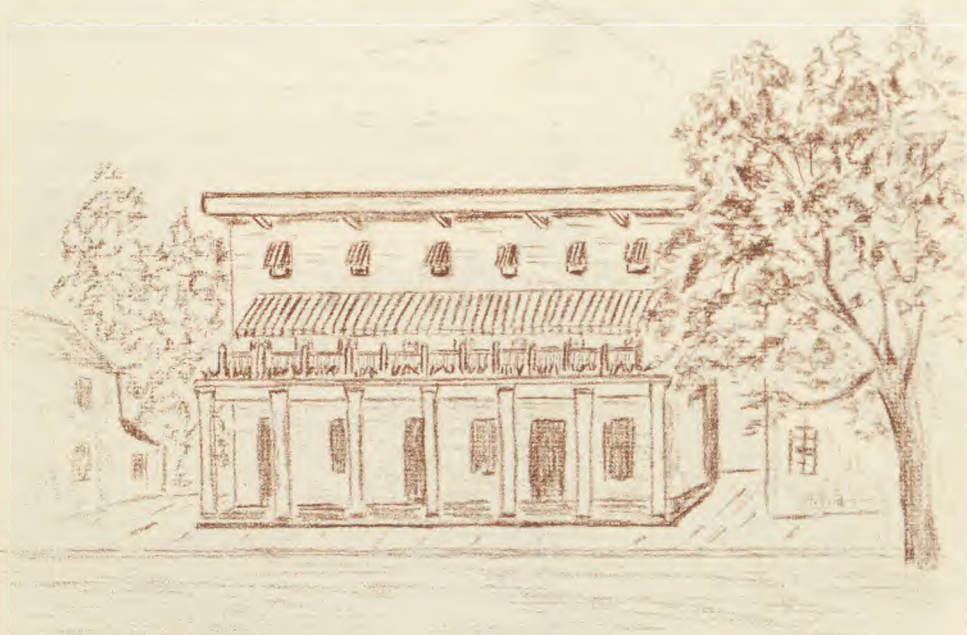
Keyport, a shore resort, was proud of the Raritan Inn, a three-story building which overlooked the Beach Park and the bay. This was a popular place for summer visitors. It had a huge porch to relax, the bay for swimming, and it was always lighted with Japanese lanterns. Next on sloping Front Street was the Mansion House, a brick structure and a good reliable hotel. The businessmen met there and it was a haven for salesmen. There were many more smaller hotels but these were the two I remember most clearly.

Getting into Matawan territory, on the north side of the railroad tracks was The Woodbine, a low wooden building with living quarters on the second floor, where William Kennedy and his family lived. There was a bar room and a bottling

room on the first floor, and plenty of space to pull in the horses and buggies. Cars were scarce in those days. This was a popular hotel and a good waiting place for the trolley that ran from Matawan to Keyport.

Across the tracks was the Aberdeen Hotel, a more pretentious inn. Stairs on both ends of the three-story, red brick building led to a wide porch on the second floor. The bar and dining room were on the first floor, and sleeping quarters for the vacationers or businessmen were on the second and third floors. Because it was opposite the railroad station, it was a busy place, an ideal spot for transients coming in on the trains. Here the salesmen could have a good meal and sleeping facilities and the next morning they could rent a rig from Samuel Towler's livery stable and call on their customers. This was a pleasant spot: the green well-kept lawn sloped down to the station plaza, and a huge bed of red canna lilies grew at the foot of the slope.

As we progress up Main Street, the next hotel on the right was The Homestead, a comfortable building overlooking the then wide creek on the spot where the Town & Country auto showroom now stands. As I remember, Mr. Kaufer was



the owner and the comfortable place was rightfully named; the atmosphere was that of a real home.

Continuing up Main Street, on the left, the Matawan House rose three stories and was a most popular place. The white, wooden building was owned at one time by the Farry family, then or perhaps before, Mr. McCue carried on the business. The proprietor I remember was James Fury, a gentleman from Trenton who lived there with his family for several years. This structure was quite an impressive building. Green trim enhanced the whiteness of the wide boards, and a wide porch on both the first and second floors extended the length of the building. There was a large bar room on the downtown end, and a game room where friendly games of euchre and pinochle were played. A long and very elegant hallway divided the business part of the building from the living quarters. This hallway extended to the rear, where several rooms served as kitchens, storage rooms, and, I believe, at one time headquarters for servants. The large dining room was usually filled as were the many bedrooms on both the second and third floors. The long parlor and family living room was used when the ladies felt the need of a beer or a fancy drink.

Because there were so many transients—the automobile was now on the road—this was a well-used room. My friend, Mr. Fury's daughter, and I would hide behind one of the large sofas and have a fine time peeking out and watching the smooching. But our special fun was sliding down the beautiful curving bannisters. The shining mahogany rails were a temptation and we spent hours sliding down from the upper floor, racing down the hall and straddling the smooth bannister down to the ground floor. I have never outgrown the desire to slide down a bannister, and not too many years ago, when I was serving as a member of the Borough Council, I couldn't resist the call; I forgot my dignity as a borough official and straddled the bannister in the municipal building. My colleagues thought I had suddenly lost my mind—I think sometimes they still doubt my sanity.

The Matawan House remains in my mind a very handsome building where

many fine people congregated.

The next inn I can recall was the one in Freneau. At that time, Freneau was not a part of the borough. The inn was owned by the Applegate family and was called Mt. Pleasant Inn. When the settlers first came to this area, they thought the spot so beautiful they called it Mt. Pleasant, and during Phillip Freneau's lifetime it was always referred to by that name. Although it has been renamed many times because of changes in ownership, the name Mt. Pleasant always seemed the most appropriate one. It is located at the corner of Mill Road and Freneau Avenue, not too far from the site of Phillip Freneau's grave.

All of these hotels or inns were respectable places, where the men gathered for a glass of ale or rum and for discussions of the topics of the day. Women were not permitted in the bar rooms, so there were no brawls between the sexes. If an argument got too hot, the proprietor opened the door and invited the troublemakers to settle their dispute outside.

The inns in the old days were as important as the up-to-date motels of today, a lot cheaper and more hospitable.

Published January 16, 1974

Landmark Mansion to be Demolished

In a few days, the palatial home once occupied by the John Terhune family will go the way of many other lovely buildings in Matawan. The once-beautiful house on Main Street, which has been a symbol of wealth and gentility in the heart of the town, will be given a push by a bulldozer and in a matter of minutes will be just another heap of rubbish.

The Terhune family, rich and respected, lived in this house beside the Methodist Church for many years. A circular room added to the original building enhanced its attractiveness. John Terhune was a tall slender man, very much an aristocrat. Seeing him walking down the street followed by his pedigreed pointer, one instantly thought, "There is a prosperous gentleman." His wife was always attired in fashion's finest, her white hair piled high on her head and beautifully styled.



In the evening, if I passed the home, I always paused to catch a glimpse of the new room. The logs crackling in the fireplace cast a glow on the highly polished paneling, highlighting the luxurious furniture and silken draperies. To make the picture complete, the Terhune family, Miss Kathryn, the beautiful blonde daughter, Mr. Terhune, perhaps leaning against the fireplace mantel, and Mrs. Terhune, white hair outstanding against the dark woodwork, completed a picture that reminded one of an elaborate stage setting.

The wide porch with its comfortable rocking chairs was so inviting I always wished we might slip in and rest awhile. A well-trimmed hedge surrounded the grounds and in the rear of the building Rose of Sharon trees separated the front lawn from the garage and garden in the rear.

The Terhunes were one of the first families to own an auto. I can remember the day the kindly chauffeur, Bob Burns, gave my little friend and me a ride around the block in the new red car. What a thrill that was. We were almost speechless! We felt like little queens riding in a fairy tale chariot.

That was the era of gentility, of

polished brass door knockers, tea in the late afternoon and dressing for dinner at night. The time of loyal servants, parlor maids and chauffeurs, and always a domineering cook reigning supremely in her kitchen. It was also the time for family dinners, when guests were entertained in the homes, and life revolved around the family. Even though there was a decided difference between the rich and the poor, this was a condition found in all walks of life, all families making home the base for their activities.

After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Terhune, the house was rented to several different tenants, finally becoming headquarters for the YMCA. The building is now dirty, and windowless, a poor old pathetic shell of what had been a beautiful happy home. I am sure we are all glad that it is to be demolished, as it has been a fire hazard and a temptation for loiterers. Like a poor old hound dog, it will be put out of its misery. But with its demise we lose a part of the old life, and the grandeur and beauty of the Terhune mansion will be just a memory which will grow dim as the years go by.

Published April 3, 1974

The First (indoor) Picture Show

Today everyone talks about and attends the outdoor motion pictures. Seated comfortably in their cars, they can see and hear while munching on a hot dog or a hamburger, their kids in pajamas asleep in the back seat.

How different it was about 60 years ago when the movies were just making their appearance. Matawan was fortunate in being one of the first small towns to support a movie theatre. In the building where Sandford's Pharmacy now op-

erates, a couple of enterprising residents opened the theatre, and for the large sum of five or ten cents, the children at a matinee could see four one-reel pictures and an illustrated song.

Prices at night were a bit higher. Mrs. Leary was the pianist and played appropriate music. She was a genius in this, thumping out hoofbeats for the westerns, and military music as the army forces marched by. Of course, these were silent films, so the piano had to fill in the background. Sad mournful tunes set the mood for the tearjerkers and "Hearts and Flowers" or "I Love You Truly" accompanied the love scenes.

The shows were so well attended the promoters decided to bring them out-

Demise of Train Station Marks End of Era

In the near future, the old wooden, bile-colored railroad station will either be removed or demolished. With its passing go many pleasant and a few unpleasant memories. Pleasant, because many friends met there each day, discussed the problems of the world, or boasted about their families. Unpleasant, because of the early morning rising to catch the train and the dismay when one arrived late, just in time to see the cloud of smoke disappearing beyond the trestle.

In its early days, the building was considered quite the latest and finest

doors. (No air conditioning in those days.) In the vacant lot in the rear of the building they set up some wooden benches, real back-breakers, and on summer evenings we sat on these hard benches fighting off the mosquitoes.

"The Perils of Pauline" was one of the thrillers, and we looked forward each week to her new predicaments. Bill Hart and Tom Mix rode their horses into the sunset and Theda Bara's love scenes taught the town sweethearts some techniques. In bad weather they shifted the piano inside so the show went on.

We can boast that Matawan had the first open air movies and good or bad we sure enjoyed them.

Published October 10, 1973

station on the line. Trimmed with very fancy gingerbread moldings around the edge of roof and doors and windows, it was quite impressive. A wide board platform protected the dainty high topped, laced boots of the city-bound ladies from becoming muddy and scratched by the cinders bordering the tracks.

Inside, a huge potbellied stove warmed the chilled commuters, and they clustered around it listening for the warning whistle of the approaching train. Even though the smoke from the coal burning engines swept across the open area, the



station was always clean.

The apartment on the second floor was occupied by the station agent and his wife. For many years, Elwood Van Brackle filled that position.

This was the main station, but on the line to Freehold there was a small station built at Stillwell Street, just after the bridge which spanned the stream which is now Lake Matawan. That trestle is still used once in a while for freights. The other station was built in Freneau. Matawan Lumber now operates in that vicinity. A ticket agent presided at each station and the trains made stops at Morganville, Wickatunk and Marlboro on its way to Freehold.

Matawan was a busy junction, as passengers for the bay area, Keyport and Keansburg down to Monmouth Beach changed from the New York train to the shorter one which followed the shore line. Other commuters took the Freehold line and the direct tracks stretched out as far as Bay Head junction.

Before the coming of the trolley, stage coaches met the trains. Samuel Towler had a fine stable near the station and did a good business transporting the travelers to their destinations beyond the

railroad perimeter. Many people met the trains in their own private carriages. The trolley was a great asset to the commuters, and when they were discontinued buses took their place.

Early morning and evening were the busy times, and the station buzzed like a beehive. A newspaper stand, managed for years by Mr. Doty and his daughter, supplied the readers with cigarettes, gum, and candy.

A trip to New York was a real treat, and I can recall the loneliness of the empty station when we returned at about one in the morning. This train was called the "theatre train" because the theatre-goers were its best customers. We dubbed it "the Owl" because of its midnight run.

Another era coming to a close. The elegance of the red plush seats, the feeling of adventure when we boarded the train, and the exciting impatience while we waited for its appearance around the bend—maybe it sounds corny, but I repeat with Archie Bunker, "Those were the days."

Published November 14, 1973

Borough Industries Included Piano Factory, Sawmill

Matawan has never been classified as an industrial town, but as we look back to

the early years of this century we can list many enterprises that did a thriving



business.

On Church Street the building recently occupied by M & T Chemical was once a piano factory. Across the road was a foundry where the metal piano plates were cast. Bruce Eggleston, one-time mayor of Matawan, was the owner. Later, the business was sold to Henry

Wickham.

Eventually, the piano factory closed and the Munning Brothers, Peter and August, opened an electroplating and polishing equipment company. Again the business changed hands and became the Hanson-Van Winkle Todd Co. This company boasted a large payroll and was a



very busy factory where buffing wheels, electroplating and polishes used in the trade were manufactured. These supplies were sent all over the world and many representatives of foreign countries visited the plant. Unfortunately, a few years ago, this branch of the business was closed and the M & T Chemical took over. This company also moved out and now South River Metal Products Company wants to operate there.

Cartan and Devlin, located where Glenn Garden Apartments were recently built on Main Street, ran a very successful coal and lumber business. The property extended to the banks of the creek where a sawmill was built, the lumber cut and stored in long buildings. The metallic whine of the saws could be heard for blocks. All the kids loved to play hide-and-seek around these lumber sheds and waded through the fragrant sawdust. One young man nearly lost his life when he was caught in the sharp-toothed saw.

I can even remember an old couple who wove rag rugs on a huge loom. Mr.

and Mrs. West lived in a small house below the station. The large loom filled their living room and it was fascinating to watch them weave the colorful rugs. My grandmother and I would sew strips of rags together and wind the long lengths into big balls. These we sold to the Wests, who in turn wove them into carpets or rugs and sold them to furniture stores. Our whole house was carpeted with the rugs and the effect was comfortable and homey.

On the north side of the railroad tracks, the Matawan Tile Factory bustled with activity. Another tile factory on Atlantic Avenue, called Mosaic Tile and later Atlantic Tile, did a tremendous business. Both companies are now closed.

Also on Atlantic Avenue, Mr. Anderson moved here from North Jersey and opened a basket factory. All of these enterprises brought new people to town and many have stayed on through the years and raised their families here. I am not sure of the exact site, but somewhere near the railroad station a canning factory carried on a profitable

program, using the vegetables grown by the nearby farmers.

Dunlop and Lisk filled the demand for pipe, pots and other clay articles. This pottery was on Washington Street opposite Terhune Park. This section of town was always called the Gully Bridge section because of the small brick bridge spanning a trickling stream, which eventually found its way to the creek.

A large brick building opposite the railroad station housed a company that manufactured a cereal product. It was called the Rice Food Factory, and later became a piano factory. This building was burned beyond repair a few years later.

All the factories near the railroad tracks had sidings and shipped their merchandise by freight trains. Later when trucks became popular, some products were trucked to their destination. Many people worked in these factories their whole lifetime. Strikes were unknown, everyone happy and contented in their work and served with a sense of loyalty to their employer.

We could really return to the good old days once in awhile just to learn what contentment and peace mean. Manufacturing a good product, pride in our handiwork seemed to mean more than

the almighty dollar. Old Mr. Rodgers, one-time borough clerk, spent his early life at the potter's wheel. Many pieces of pottery he molded can be found in Matawan homes.

"The Good Old Days." Hard work, but with a sense of accomplishment when the day ended. Enjoying life together with family and friends, taking the time (which we had plenty of) to help the other fellow or just having a get-together with the neighbors. Pretty square and corny? Probably. But we all ate heartily with no fear of ulcers and most of us slept well nights without the aid of sleeping pills.

Published March 20, 1974

"Ragpicker" Enabled Youths to Earn Money

Someone once remarked about a very rich child, "She had too much too soon." This is what is happening to most of our children today. Like a baby bird, the child opens his mouth and the fond parents are there to fill it. Certainly we are responsible for our children—but in trying to give them all the advantages we didn't have, we sometimes overdo it. We take away the pride of achievement, the satisfaction of a job well done, when we hand over spending money instead of encouraging the youngster to earn some



himself. These remarks are just to accentuate the difference in our sense of values and way of life of 60 years ago as compared with today.

On the corner of Main and Park Avenue, there was a small low wooden house where Mr. and Mrs. Luke Stoddard lived. When Mr. Stoddard died, his widow converted the front of the house into a small candy shop, and the living room became an ice cream parlor, probably the first of its kind in Matawan. Mrs. Stoddard was a short plump little lady, always smiling and pleasant. Her sister, Julia Barclay, was a sedate and quiet lady, very efficient. The combination of personalities worked well, and they conducted a profitable business.

I can still remember the bell tinkling as we opened the door, clutching a penny in our dirty little hands. Imagine the many, many times those ladies had to answer the summoning bell to sell one penny candy! If we were really lucky we might have a nickel, and do you know the ecstasy of possessing five cents and the agony of decision as to what to choose? How patient those kind ladies were as we decided whether we wanted gumdrops, mints or butterscotch. I often wondered, having no children of their own, how they understood us so well. Harry Barclay was their brother, but he didn't possess the virtue of patience, so we had to make quick decisions when it was his turn to tend shop.

I've told you how we spent our pennies; now I'll explain how we earned them. In those days, there was no trash collection, no reclamation or recycling centers. Papers and anything else that could be burned were used in cooking and heating stoves. We collected any metal—iron, brass or copper—and stored it in boxes or barrels. Periodically, a junk man, driving an open wagon, would ride through the town. Tin cans, fitted up as bells, hung on a line in his wagon, and these metallic sounds heralded his coming. We called him the "ragpicker" because he took anything—clothes, papers—anything discarded. We received the best price for barrels of bones, which we gathered in the fields or along the roads. The butchers were very generous to the dogs and good shin soup bones could be purchased for about five cents each. We could always find plenty of bones and

received the huge sum of 25 cents a barrel. The ragpicker sold them to button factories. When we heard the clanking of his tin-can bells, we would rush home and get our merchandise ready for bargaining. In the summer our profits were spent in the ice cream parlor, eating the cool sweet slowly, savoring every spoonful of that delicious tutti-frutti or, on rare occasions, orange ice.

At a very early age, we learned the value of a penny and also the lesson that if we wanted some of Mrs. Stoddard's ice cream or penny candies, we had to earn the money. But it was a very satisfactory feeling, as we let a friend have a teeny bite or a chocolate drop, to know that "That's my candy. I bought it myself with my own money."

Published February 13, 1974

Remembering the Gypsies who Visited Matawan

When I wake up early on an especially beautiful morning, I have a desire to take to the road and be a gypsy for a few hours. This vein of thought brings back memories of the early 1900's when every summer a band of real Romanian gypsies camped for several weeks near St. Joseph's Church.

The cry, "Here come the gypsies," sent us scurrying up to Main Street, and we watched spellbound as these mysterious people drove through town to that section of Lower Main Street we called Oak Shades. There were very few dwellings in that neighborhood, but a thick group of trees offered a perfect camp site.

The horses, resplendent with gay trappings and tinkling bells, pulled the covered wagons, and dark-haired children peeped out shyly from the canvas-covered vehicles.

Sometimes nondescript dogs trotted along beside or under the wagons and many of the older children and women walked beside the horses. Their long full skirts brushed the dusty road and their beads and bangles harmonized with the brass bells on the harness of the horses. Many of the men were dressed in colorful jackets and their white teeth gleamed beneath drooping mustaches.

In the evening, when we passed by on the trolley car, we could see them clustered around the campfire and smell

the spicy aroma of the food bubbling in the iron pots. They pitched tents or slept in their wagons and the children played happily under the trees. Some of the women were expert fortune tellers and many a young couple crossed their palms with silver to hear what the future had in store for them.

Although we always saw them enter the town, we seldom saw them leave. Like the poem, "They folded their tents in the night time and silently stole away". They were a glamorous group and we envied them their life on the open road. We were always tempted to join them but lacked the courage.

Published November 7, 1973

Recollections of Two Old Matawan Families

I don't know just when the Italian families first came to Matawan; probably sometime in the late 1800s. My first recollection of these fine people was when Thomas Tassini, his wife and two children opened a fruit and candy store in a small house (now demolished) about where the Cork 'n Bottle stands.

There were few children in this neighborhood so I welcomed the little boy, John, one year younger than I, and we became staunch friends and playmates. We were just babies, but as we grew and were able to run about, we played in the cool backyard behind the shop. Paved with red brick with a small spot where Mr. Tassini raised some Italian herbs, it was a pleasant place. Here the smiling good-natured Italian roasted his peanuts in a hand-rotated roaster, while we sat on the cool bricks and watched.

Mr. Tassini was such a happy man; he sang old Italian songs for us and when the peanuts were roasted, he generously gave us a bag full.

Occasionally, John and I would disagree and a fight would ensue. John always won because he could pull my long hair, but I couldn't get a grip on his closely cut head.

One day we dared to venture down the hill at the foot of Maiden Lane where the creek wandered snakelike through the meadows. This was forbidden territory and John went reluctantly. My grand-

father had a small rowboat anchored in a slip cut into the bank and at high tide this was completely filled with water. We pushed the boat out into the creek and proceeded to use the slip as a pool. John said he was afraid of snakes so he just dangled his feet in the water, not even removing his shoes. I guess I was the first "streaker" in Matawan because I took off all my clothes except my undershirt, which I couldn't manage, and had a good splashing time in the muddy water.

Certainly, the Lord watched over us that day. One false step and we would have slipped right out into the fast-moving tide or been caught in the piling of the old dock. I remember this day so well because when my grandfather discovered what we were doing, he rushed down the hill, cut a nice stinging willow switch, and my bare body received more than 40 lashes as he whipped me all the way up the hill. We never tried that again, but eventually my uncle taught us how to swim.

The Tassini family became a part of Matawan and they did a good business because their merchandise was always the best. The daughter, Julia, attended business college, worked as a bookkeeper for many years and eventually married Peter Rollo. John was graduated from Rutgers University and, always interested in sports, he was one of the favorite referees, especially at Ft. Monmouth.

When the Fred Schock building was moved from the corner of Main and Little Streets, Mr. Tassini bought it and the family moved across the street to this new headquarters. This is the building which they later rented to the Ryan brothers and where business is still carried on in that name.

After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Tassini, John and Julia continued the business until it was sold to the Ryan brothers. In the meantime, John had married and the couple had one son named for the grandfather, Thomas.

After the business was sold, John opened up an insurance and real estate office in the adjoining building. John was a happy man as was his father before him, and he had the reputation of never saying "No" if he could help someone in any way. Five years ago all of Matawan mourned his death. His wife, Tess, took

over the insurance business, and she and her son, Tom, carried on for awhile. About a year ago, they sold the business to the Ross Maghan Agency.

Thomas lives on Broad Street across from his mother and his aunt, Mrs. Rollo. He is married and has one daughter. So he is the last of a respected name in this area. This is just an intimate note on one family who took a chance on Matawan, became a real part of the town and were respected by all.

In this same neighborhood, which is the heart of the Matawan business district, another fine Italian couple chose to make their home. Robert Armellino and Germania Sarbuchello were friends in Italy and when they came to the United States they met again. They renewed this friendship, which resulted in their marriage at St. Joseph's Church.

Mr. Armellino opened up a shoe repair shop in a small building opposite the Tassini fruit store. When the Schock building was moved to this site, the small building was demolished and the Armellinos packed up and went across the street to the store vacated by the Tassinis. Here they carried on the business and raised their six children. The four girls, Philomena, Marian, Josephine and Elizabeth, and two sons, Jerome and Victor, reflected the loving care and training given them by their parents.

Because of the excellent workmanship and his knowledge of the trade, Mr. Armellino was never without customers and had to hire help. The public liked dealing with this happy man, maybe because of the way his dark eyes sparkled when he smiled.

The youngest son, Victor, attended the University of Illinois and later served in the armed forces. About 1950 he entered the field of politics and was elected to the Borough Council. After a period of retirement from the public scene he returned and was elected mayor. He is now serving his second term. We are sorry Mr. and Mrs. Armellino did not live to see their son so honored, but this is just another instance which proves what fine citizens we have in Matawan.

Next week I'll carry on with more about our respected citizens.

Shark in Matawan Creek Claimed Two Lives

On a hot afternoon in July, 1916, the quiet of the peaceful little town of Matawan was shattered when screams from several boys were heard.

The youngsters had been swimming in the creek, diving from the old propeller boat docks at the foot of Dock Street. At high tide, the water was deep and the now unused docks were an ideal place to exhibit their diving powers.

One small boy, Lester Stillwell, had proven his diving ability with a beautiful running dive, but to the amazement and fear of his companions, he did not surface. As they watched anxiously, the water became colored as though red paint had been spilled. The frightened boys ran up the hill screaming for help and soon a large group of men and women gathered on the dock. Uncertain of the fate of the boy, they hesitated before attempting to go into the water.

Finally, Stanley Fisher, a young man who was proprietor of a cleaning establishment, heard of the excitement, boarded the trolley car and was soon on the scene. He hastily removed his shoes and plunged into the water. He searched under the dock and dove deep into the creek. To the horror of all, he suddenly screamed, and although in great pain, he managed to get to the dock, where he was pulled up out of the water. The spectators were speechless as they looked at this heroic man. The flesh had been torn from his leg, and he was quickly losing consciousness.

There were no ambulances in those days, so the men carefully carried him to the station where they placed him in the baggage car. He was taken to the Long Branch Hospital, the nearest one at that time. But upon arrival they found the loss of blood and shock had been too much, and Stanley had died on the way. There were many conjectures as to what kind of mammal could have gotten so far inland, as the creek was small, but it left no traces other than the two dead fellows. Because this was the period of the first world war and submarines were supposed to be patrolling the coast, general opinion was that the fish were driven

closer to shore and that a shark had found his way up the creek.

All beaches were closed to swimming until nets were put up, but few had any desire to enter the water. Although no battle was fought here, the war had claimed two casualties. Stanley was buried with honors as a hero and the town

mourned with the Stillwell family on the loss of their little son. Both sleep in Rose Hill cemetery, their headstones a grim reminder of the tragedy that struck Matawan July, 1916.

Published December 5, 1973

Nathan Ervin: Matawan's Country Doctor

Every small village has its own physician, labelled in the old days "country doctor". Matawan had several good old-fashioned doctors, but the one I remember most clearly is, of course, the one who attended our family.

His name was Dr. Nathan Ervin, a tall, gray-haired man. He had a white beard

and tiny mustache, and I recall his lips were very pink. As a child, I had complete confidence in him. He was kind, and even though I didn't like the taste of his medicine, I felt better after he had been to see me.

I wonder how many miles the general practitioner covered in his day's jour-



ney? Before the automobile, Dr. Ervin drove a two-passenger carriage, and I remember seeing him on the coldest or rainiest nights driving his lantern-lighted carriage through the darkness, probably 'way out into the country. Later he purchased a little black Ford, and you would find it chugging along the back roads anytime of the day or night.

His little black bag contained many mysteries, but always the right thing for what ailed you. The shelves of his office fascinated me—yellow, green and white pills, gallon jugs of red (probably cherry-flavored) liquid. The detestable castor oil—the mighty pain killer—how did he ever distinguish between all of them? But you spoke your ailment and he knew just which bottle or jar contained the medicine needed.

The day of the country doctor is gone forever, I'm afraid. The only way today's children know about him is from "Gun-smoke" or some early movie. But, he was a most important person in the community. First, he instilled faith and

hope where fear had weakened the patient. He was firm but kind, and when we sent for him we knew he would be there as soon as possible. He was the peacemaker in many disrupted families, leading and directing them because they had faith in him.

I believe this was true of all the general practitioners or country doctors from the East to the West. I am only speaking of Dr. Ervin because he was the living example of our image of a country doctor.

Today, the many fine general practitioners, surgeons, gynecologists, etc., are just as devoted to their patients and are to be praised for their fine work. Miracles are performed, lives extended, hopes renewed, all because of their dedicated skill.

Time passes quickly—there's really no place in this rushing world for an old country doctor. But we remember him and respect him.

Published April 24, 1974

Matawan's Grand Old Lady to Mark 86th Year

The annual St. Lupo celebration was instituted by a group of Italians who came to Matawan about 1905-10. These families came from a section of Italy where St. Lupo was the patron saint. When they settled in Matawan, they formed a club to carry on the tradition of their beloved saint.

Through the years, the celebration, held in July, was the outstanding event of the year. We all looked forward to this day. A parade was featured and at night splendid fireworks attracted crowds from all over the area. There were all kinds of goodies for sale on the open ground below the railroad station and it was a real gala occasion. The residents of the town, as well as visitors, lined Main Street to watch the parade.

Now we come to the main part of my story. In this parade you would always see a smiling, plump, tiny lady, marching with head held high, proud of her Italian ancestry and so happy! This was Mrs. Victoria Bucco, and we all waited impatiently until she appeared. The parade was nothing to us if she wasn't marching. Her dark eyes twinkled and

her smiles were infectious. I'm sure many times her feet were aching with all that marching, but she never faltered.

Through the years I watched her family grow and it was always a pleasure to drop into her little home for a short chat.

She was born Victoria Vecchio and came to Matawan in 1910. Shortly afterward, she met and married Rocco Bucco, a quiet, hard-working man, who toiled diligently long hours for the railroad to support his growing family. Eleven children were born to this fine couple and love was the foundation of their family life.

I believe all the boys served in the armed forces and returned to live useful and happy lives. Sadness came to the family when their son, Philip, was accidentally killed, but they clung together in their sorrow as they had in their happiness, hiding their tears behind smiles.

Since her husband's death, Mrs. Bucco has been living with her children who are very happy to have her with them. She is very proud, as we all are, of her son,

Lawrence (Larry to all), who has been an honored member of the Borough Council.

Some time ago, Mrs. Bucco was hospitalized. A very serious operation caused much concern among her family and friends. But her strong Italian spirit pulled her through and today she is well and as lively as ever. On Tuesday, she will celebrate her 86th birthday, years of hard work, of service to those she loved and, I'm sure also, filled with happiness.

One statement she made when she was so ill in the hospital should teach all of us a lesson. At the lowest point in her illness, with her family gathered around her, the courageous little woman smiled and said, "I'm ready." I hope when my time comes to leave this world I will be as "ready" as this dear little lady, Mrs. Victoria Bucco.

Published April 10, 1974

Despite Rapid Growth, Matawan Retains Charm

In the past 25 years, we have seen daisy-dotted fields, farmlands and wooded areas converted into bustling residential developments.

We grew too fast, too soon, but I think Matawan has met the challenge of change. We are no longer a tiny village, but even with the rush and flow of traffic and the loss of some of our older buildings, we still retain a bit of the charm that has always made Matawan a good town to come home to.

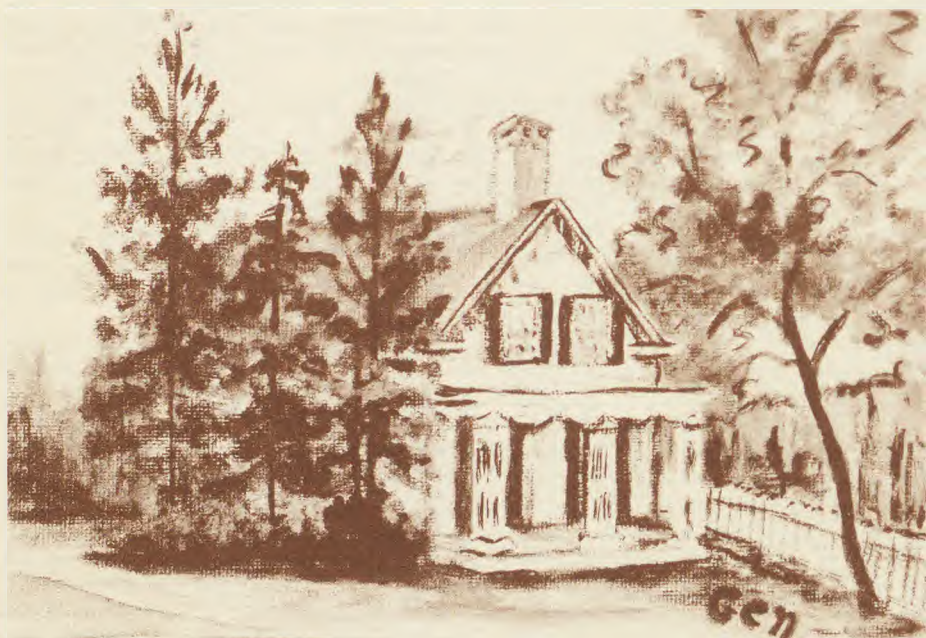
At one time, the borough's municipal officials met in one of the firehouses. Then they graduated to the ground floor of the American Legion Building on Main Street. On that floor were the Police Department (about three men) and the accounting department which consisted

of the tax assessor, the tax collector and the borough clerk, who also served as water tax collector.

A small jailcell in the rear housed the few offenders and the regular Borough Council meetings as well as court cases were held behind a low railing in the rear of the large room. I forgot to mention we had a judge, too.

In the late 1950s, the council purchased the building vacated by the Farmers and Merchants Bank when F & M built a new bank on Ravine Drive and Main Street.

The building was remodeled in accordance with the needs of the larger Police Dept., Maintenance Dept., and clerical staff. This was a major change in the business section of the town. A few years later, the Stillwell house adjoining the





new bank was torn down to create more parking space.

More apartments were built in the Ravine Drive area and Glenn Gardens went up on lower Main Street. All the farmland along Matawan Avenue and Aberdeen Road became a lovely development, Marc Woods.

The township had already developed the farmlands and, although there is a small shopping area there, the Strathmore people seem to like our little town for shopping.

During this so-called progressive period, the 100-year-old Farmers and Merchants Bank changed hands and became Franklin State Bank. Immediately, the building was remodeled and more drive-in windows added. To do this, the Leo Weinstein building, which had been the Farmers and Merchants headquarters for 75 years before, had to be demolished.

Churches were overcrowded. The beautiful brick Methodist Church, which stood as a sentinel at the top of Ravine Drive and Main Street, was labeled unsafe, so this old landmark came crashing down. A larger and more practical church was erected on Atlantic Avenue in Matawan Township, but we all miss the stately white steeple and beautiful stained glass memorial windows of the old building.

More parking space was needed by the Central Jersey Bank, so the long grey

building known as Commercial Block, adjoining the Legion Building, met the same fate as the church. But the lovely bed of flowers planted by Central Jersey adds a delightful touch of color in the otherwise plain parking lot.

The Schock homestead, later owned by Mayor Spafford Schanck, also succumbed to the wrecking machinery. Fortunately, the professional building and Sun Savings' new office, which replaced the beautiful white house, are assets to the town in architecture as well as services.

The little old library building at the corner of Park Avenue and Main Street was certainly not adequate, so although we regretted losing an old building, the present colonial style library provides the services needed and is also a very satisfying structure.

The remodeling of Borough Hall is a controversial subject. Again, it was the problem of more space needed. Whether we like it or not, it is filling the needs of the Police Department and the municipal staff. The brick-paved court with its benches, trees and shrubs softens the severe lines of the building.

After the damaging fire suffered by the Bells, owners of Foodtown, the renovation and expansion of the building is an attraction for shoppers. Ample space on Maiden Lane and Little Street provides good parking. Wherever possible, the businessmen have made room for parking. Dell's Market, the Central Jersey building, Matawan Drug, Jerry Beyer's remodeled tavern—all are trying to take care of this great increase in population.

The First Aid Squad, which has done its part in supplying services for us, has just completed its new headquarters on Little Street. It is an organization and building we can be proud of. The firemen continuously repair and enlarge their facilities. Two of the fire companies, I believe, are over 100 years old. Our firemen are among the finest in the state.

One of the important changes was razing the old Broad Street Elementary School. This had long been a problem, and the new school now completed on Broad Street is a definite improvement. The Regional High School on Atlantic Avenue is another proof of the progress made.



Commercial use of Old Trinity Church Protested

Passing the building once known as Trinity Church, I was dismayed to see several cleaning trucks parked in the side and rear of the grounds. I knew the church had been sold, but at that time it was to be an artist's studio. Although I regretted the need to dispose of the building, the fact it was to be used for art work was acceptable.

As a member of Trinity Church for over fifty years, that little building held many beautiful memories. At the time I became a member, there was no resident priest. Students from the seminary in New York conducted the Sunday evening services, and every month or so an ordained priest would officiate at the regular communion service in the morning. Finally, an agreement was made with Keyport and a priest took charge of both parishes.

I can recall my first Sunday School class of six children, the entire enrollment. As we younger people grew up and married eventually, our Sunday School membership grew. When I resigned as superintendent after 40 years, we had about 60 pupils.

What a struggle we had keeping those church doors open! But we certainly loved and enjoyed it. Our annual suppers

were always well attended and strawberry festivals were very popular.

We staged the first fashion show in Matawan and besides being very profitable, it was a lot of fun. We used the pews in the church as dressing rooms, assigning each model one or two. That way, everything moved along systematically. The Friendly Shop provided the clothes for the children and grown-up models, and we called it "From Childhood to Maturity". Tom Dennis, our soloist, sang appropriate songs for each number, and Ames Sultz provided the musical background at the piano.

It was an exciting evening and because this was our first venture, we were apprehensive about its success. We decorated the parish hall appropriately and had refreshments ready to serve. I peeked out about a half-hour before curtain time; not a person was there, and to make matters worse, it started to rain. "Oh, oh," I thought, "This cooks our goose."

But the next time I peeked, the people were coming in and in about 15 minutes it was standing room only, with some of the guests standing on tables. Were we excited!

The children did their little walk-on to

the tune of "School Days" and when "Sweet Sixteen" made her entrance, we felt we had it made. Then, a sharp flash of lightning, the roar of thunder and out went the lights! We groped our way around and finally found the altar candles. Amos kept on playing, Tommy led the audience in singing until we placed a few candles around, and several people volunteered to be torch-bearers. The overall effect was very unusual as the models strolled down the runway under the flickering candlelight.

Eventually, the lights flashed on and we continued the show. We had pleased the audience with this unexpected showing. They went home happy and we counted the profits.

This sounds like just a money-making project. The money was necessary to keep the church doors open, but working together was the important thing. Coming together to worship in the church, we worked together to support, was one way of living a good life. This is what we miss as we pass the little red brick church. Here I was confirmed, and later married. Here my children were baptized and two of them married. This is true of many of the parishioners. Trinity Church was a part of us, as we were a part of it.

Is it any wonder as I pass by the building now I feel the tears starting? To me, a beautiful structure has been desecrated. I would rather have seen it razed.

Published March 6, 1974

The Day Collier Gave a Party for the Town

Matawan in the early days was a small settlement surrounded by farmlands. In the early spring, the winter wheat crop was plowed under and the rich soil, plowed and harrowed, was always beautiful. Potatoes, corn and tomatoes were the principal vegetables grown for market. Everyone had a small home garden.

The newly plowed fields with the straight furrows, or curving gracefully around a curve, were a striking contrast to the new spring green. The rich earth tones of color were always a temptation to pick up paints and brushes and spend

the day creating some rural scenes.

At Wickatunk, a small station on the railroad which ran from Matawan to Freehold, Mr. Collier, owner of that excellent magazine, built a beautiful home on the hill overlooking the valleys and slopes where the vegetables were growing. A white pillared mansion, it was a most attractive spot.

A few years after the building was completed, Mr. Collier issued an invitation to all the surrounding areas for a series of entertainment and plenty of food. This was the day of the first aeroplane, and I believe Mr. Collier owned one. On top of the hill was a landing area and also a huge polo field.

My uncle treated my little friend and me to a day's outing, so we hopped on the little two-car train and off we went. We had to walk about a mile from the station up the hill to the party grounds.

The first thing to entertain us was a polo game. We didn't understand it, but it was very exciting. Then the man in charge announced there was to be a "drag". Instead of chasing a fox, the hunting dogs followed the scent of something that was dragged over the fields and hills. Red-coated hunters followed the hounds. From the high vantage point, other riders could be seen coming down the fields and leaping the fences—a thrilling sight.

Then to our delight, the planes were pushed from the hangars and we saw our first aeroplane flight. After all this excitement, we found we were very hungry. That need was soon filled. Huge tents had been erected, and the tables under them were overflowing with food—ham, salads, fruit cake, pie. It was like a regular country fair. Ice cream in those days, as well as soda, was a real luxury, so we made the most of it. Everything free! One boy came up gasping, "I just ate my 15th plate of ice cream." He looked like it might have been one too many.

It was a wonderful day for the hundreds of people who attended. When we trudged down the dusty road to the little station we were a dirty, dusty, untidy group, but so happy with memories we would never forget.

That was about 65 years ago, but I can close my eyes and remember all those goodies and the excitement of the planes

and horses. The beautiful home is now a school for girls run by the Roman Catholic Church. I believe it is called The House of the Good Shepherd—a very fitting name. Right from the beginning, Mr. Collier was a good shepherd to all his neighbors.

Published May 8, 1974

Cartan's Department Store: Christmas Wonderland

Many years ago in Matawan, Christmas was a very special time of the year and the streets were busy with people walking back and forth, horses and sleighs slipping through the snow, bells jangling and smiles everywhere.

Preparations for the holiday season didn't begin in the early fall—no ads in the papers reminding us that Christmas was only three months away. The first of December we began planning, writing our letters to Santa, and dropping hints as to what we hoped to receive. Unlike the shops of today, toys, special sweets, and fruits and gifts were not everyday merchandise. Only at the holiday season were the stores stocked with Christmas items.

Cartan's Department Store, in the building where Andy cuts short and long hair, was a real oldtime general store. Here one could purchase groceries, kerosene oil for the lamps, notions, dress materials, boots and shoes, and clothing. A roof over the windows and entry extended over the sidewalk to the curb and protected customers from both rain and sun.

No self-service here. Pleasant clerks waited on the customers, carefully weighing out the sugar, flour and butter. The coffee beans were ground in a large hand-turned grinder, which always fascinated us and oh! the aroma of freshly ground coffee.

At Christmas time, this shop became a wonderland. All the ordinary everyday articles were put under the counters and the Christmas merchandise was brought out. Each window was redecorated, always a live Christmas tree, gay with strings of popcorn and cranberries and glittering tinsel.

We waited impatiently until the window decorations were completed. Then

we knew we could wander down the aisles and see the wonderful new array of toys. Hands behind our backs, because we were forewarned about touching anything, we slowly walked back and forth, mentally choosing the toys we would write to Santa about or diplomatically tell our parents about.

Sometimes the clerk would wind up a mechanical monkey or train and we would watch it spin up and down the floor. Once in awhile, we could carefully hold a doll or woolly animal. We looked forward all year to this moment and it was worth waiting for. I can still remember the thrill and the enjoyment of walking through that holiday wonderland.

Today the shops are so full of toys all year that Christmas doesn't bring the same expectant feeling it did for us. True, the modern inventions, electric trains, moon rockets, robots and all the up-to-date games and toys are marvelous, educational and appropriate in this fast moving, technological age. But I wonder if they bring as much joy to the little child as the clown that pops out of a box or a furry monkey that dances when he is wound up.

The simple Christmas we knew was so different. The scent of the real pine tree with the gold star shining in the early morning light as we crept down the stairs into the cold parlor to see what Santa had left. This is a feeling that can't be compared with any excitement of today. A doll, perhaps a book or two, one toy and a stocking filled with nuts, one orange or apple, and some hard candies.

I recall one Christmas when money was so scarce we couldn't afford a tree. My grandfather plowed through the snow to the woods near Ravine Drive, cut down a cedar tree, and dragged it home through the snow. I'll never forget how happy I was when he returned, his beard and black cape coat covered with glittering snowflakes and a lovely little cedar tree over his shoulder.

Life was not easy in those days, but we didn't complain about the lack of toys, clothes and sweets, because we knew no other way of life. When Christmas came and we received even the simplest gifts, we were happy.

The simple greeting "Merry Christmas" had real meaning then. So I say to

all, "A real old-fashioned Merry Christmas"

Published December 19, 1973

Vandalism Threatens Historic Rosehill Cemetery

If one could turn back the pages of time to 1905—give or take a few years—a walk out Ravine Drive would be a pleasant experience.

The narrow dirt road curved between fields of daisies and buttercups and was bordered on each side by tall, stately cedar trees. After crossing the small bridge over the winding creek, the road curved left around a hill. Here a small stream at the bottom of a cool green glen trickled down to the creek. Creamy dogwood blossoms, honeysuckle and deep purple violets added to the beauty of this quiet spot.

Several fields were used for pasturing cows, so hit-or-miss rail fences were built to keep the cud-chewing bossies from straying.

A beautiful house called the Hankinson Farm overlooked the creek and bridge at about the spot where Washington Street ends. A path curved up the hill, bordered

by honeysuckle and wild roses. Tall locust tree blossoms mingled their fragrance with the sweetness of the honeysuckle.

As I recall, there were only six or seven small houses on the stretch of road up to the cemetery. And the cemetery is my main topic today.

The land was owned by the Fountain family, and about 1853 they established it as a cemetery. Because many wild roses grew there, I assume they felt the name "Rose Hill" was appropriate. The area has very little flat space except the part that borders the small pond. The hill rises gradually to a flat area where one can see the Raritan Bay and Staten Island in the distance.

In the early 1900's, the pond was a picturesque spot adorned with waxy white water lilies and occasionally a frog sitting on a green lily pad. In the early spring, one of our pet pastimes was catching a jar-full of pollywogs and keeping them until they graduated into full-grown frogs. The sloping sides of the hill were covered with blue wood violets and brilliant sand pinks, and large evergreen trees crowned the top. The roads, built for horse and buggy traffic, wound around the hill and were shaded by oak and horse chestnut trees.



The plots of ground where loved ones rest were always kept in perfect order, and if one could not forget the sadness which made this place necessary, the beauty of the shrubs, green grass and flowers helped ease the heartache.

Most of the Fountain family have gradually taken up their abode here, so now the cemetery is in charge of a voluntary commission. The owners of the plots either pay the sexton or have paid for perpetual care, and we call this group Friends of Rose Hill Cemetery. The commission has five members and all plot owners are considered stockholders in this non-profit organization.

Unfortunately, the interest derived from perpetual care does not cover the expenditures. The roads must be maintained, retaining walls built to avoid erosion, and too many families have no survivors to take care of the brush and weed growth. The once beautiful spot needs much attention. However, the worst problem we have today is vandalism. People who have no respect for memorial gardens have toppled monuments, tipped over and often broken markers and strewn debris all over. Vandalism is no respecter of persons living or dead.

I appeal to the public to help us by reporting any misdemeanor or suspicion of vandalism to the police.

The commission has asked for contributions to carry on the clean-up and repair program as well as volunteers to assist manually. We hope the citizens of the area will come forward and give us a hand in restoring this historical spot to its former beauty.

For more than 100 years Rose Hill has been a hallowed spot to those whose loved ones lie there. Respect for their memory could be shown by creating beauty there instead of destroying it.

Published January 30, 1974

Learning the Lesson of Energy Conservation

One of the greatest mistakes we so-called intelligent human beings make is to feel that, because we have

graduated from high school or college we have learned all there is to know about everything.

This energy crisis proves how wrong that assumption is. We have taken for granted all nature's benefits and now, like a child who has greedily gobbled up a whole box of candy, he suddenly realizes he's holding an empty container. Now we must get down to some serious thinking, learn more about the source of our supplies, get a better understanding of what conservation really means. We are a wasteful nation, not intentionally so, just thoughtlessly accepting all these modern ways of living. We don't consider or realize how much energy we can save by taking an extra minute to turn off the lights, walk around the block instead of hopping in the car. Walking would be more beneficial to our health as well as saving gas. Our garbage cans are filled with enough wasted food to supply the nation's hungry and undernourished.

Now we have a lesson to learn—we must be more thoughtful and careful—all of us from the President of the United States right down to the common man.

In the year 1913 I graduated from the old Broad Street School. We were fortunate in having Mrs. Elizabeth Gittins as our teacher. She was an inspiration to us and an excellent instructor. My part of the program was to read the class poem, which she helped me compose. I remember one stanza that is very appropriate for this energy crisis and the lesson we can learn from it. I quote:

"Older people tell us we've only just begun

That life is one big classroom where school is never done.

That when we start upon it, we find where'er we turn

Still more exacting teachers and harder tasks to learn."

Now 60 years later, I am still finding many lessons I must learn. I am thankful for the health and mental ability to learn, because I feel when a person thinks he's learned all there is to know, he's ceased to live.

Life is a continual study and unfoldment. Let's all do our homework and enjoy it.

Published January 2, 1974



Remember the Main Street Trolley?

Nearly 70 years ago, a small yellow trolley car rumbled its way up Matawan's Main Street. Many youngsters today don't even know what a trolley is, but the few of us who are left to tell the tale fondly remember that little old car, the hard caned seats and the clanging bell. The blue-uniformed conductor collected our nickel, pulled a cord and the register at the front of the car rang it up with a "ding".

The car barn was located in Keyport, so every morning at six the noisy car jolted up the rough tracks from Keyport to the railroad station at Matawan. Stopping on the north side of the tracks, the meterman shifted the pole which was attached to the electric wires, changed his steering handle to the other end facing Keyport, and away the trolley went back to Keyport.

But the one that ran up Main Street of Matawan had to journey on a curving track beneath the railroad trestle, down, and then up on the other side of the railroad tracks. This was a short run, from the railroad up Main Street to the Freneau railroad tracks. At 11:30 each night it turned under the trestle and back for a night's rest in the car barns.

The chief attraction of the first trolleys

was a potbellied iron stove in the middle of the car. We rushed to be the first one to board the trolley, so we could snuggle up close to that little coal-burning stove, especially on cold snowy nights, and it seemed in those days the snow was deeper and fell more often than it does now. The seats ran the length of the car and in the summer the company put on open cars with curtains to pull down in case of bad weather.

I'm sure my old bones would creak and crackle if I had to ride on one of these cars today, but 70 years ago a ride in an open car to Keyport was one of the thrills of the day. I doubt that I could even manage the high step to board the car. This was the idle men's favorite pastime, watching the ladies wearing tight skirts trying to get up the high steps.

When it came your turn to get off, we just pulled a cord and the motorman obligingly stopped and the conductor assisted the ladies and children. Sounds like a fairytale, doesn't it? The thrill and pleasure of a ride on that little old yellow trolley will never be replaced by the aeroplane. No one cares and few remember, but it was fun while it lasted.

The Maiden Ladies of Main Street

I have been trying to give you some word-pictures of Matawan in the early days, but occasionally I will tell you about some of the people who lived here and in their own small way helped build our unique little village. Most small towns have a few so-called maiden ladies, but about 1910 Matawan had more than its share. Each person probably had a very good reason for not marrying, because they were all charming and intelligent ladies. The townspeople always referred to these ladies as "the girls" no matter what their age, but with affection and respect.

Living in the lovely old white house now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Stockton Hopkins were the Thorn sisters. The Thorn girls were very shy, small ladies. They always wore beautiful paisley shawls, heavy or light weight according to the season. The flowers in the rear yard were always beautiful and generously given to the church and friends. The beautiful brass doorknocker and doorhandle were always polished and shone like the brightest gold. As far back as I can remember, the magnolia tree near the front door has been heralding spring with its waxy blooms and southern scents.

Across the street in the brown double house lived the Foley sisters, two charming Irish girls, whose father ran a small tailoring shop near the entrance of what is now Glenn Garden Apartments.

Continuing up Main Street, the next house, now occupied by Mrs. Tomasello, was owned by Capt. Hopkins. Here his children, Miss Dora, and son, Elwood, lived all their lives. Miss Dora, nicknamed "Dodo" by the children who loved her, was a sweet birdlike little woman who was accomplished in the genteel arts of embroidery and painting. Elwood was a quiet old gentleman and to my childish eyes had the biggest feet I ever saw.

Skip a house, and we come to the Johnson residence, where Dr. Stafflinger now has his office and residence. There were four Johnson girls; only one married and moved away from Matawan. These ladies were very well educated, intelligent and charming wom-

en. Miss Annie served many years as librarian and we owe our fine library of today to many of these women. It was a privilege to call on these ladies because they had such a wealth of information about so many things and knew just how to pass it on. Even as a child, I didn't realize I was being taught many things I should have learned in the school room.

The Farry home was the next. Miss Mary and Miss G. M. lived in this lovely white house (Mrs. Blumenthal now resides there), and they were two of the most beautiful women in Matawan. Their father owned The Matawan House at one time, and they were always dressed in the very height of fashion. Parasols were very popular in those days and I can remember the gracefulness of Miss G. M.



as she whirled her lacy sunshade and flirted with the men. She was so pretty, I always envied her.

The next house, rebuilt now into Jerry's Tavern, was owned by Miss Margaret and William Tuthill. They were both tall and stately, a very handsome couple as they strolled to church attired in fashion's finest. A dear little lady, Miss Nellie Harris lived next door. She was a tiny birdlike little woman, a devoted Sunday School teacher, and she later worked in the Farmers and Merchants Bank. She loved children, and I have a picture she snapped of me at about the age of 8 when I was wheeling my pet fox terrier in my doll carriage. Later some of my most prized flowers were plants she gave me. She called her garden the "friendship garden" because it was filled with plants given her by her loving friends.

The Arrowsmith home, now owned by Dr. Lazow, is a charming house and always reminded me of a fairy tale in its style. Here two sisters lived with their father, Henry, and they were an asset to the town in many ways. Miss Eliza also helped with the library and was a forceful personality, while Miss Julia calmly went along, polishing church brass and making delicious things for the cake sales. They also played an important part in organizing and playing in a small theatre group whose many fine productions were well attended in the old high school.

Again skip a house, and we come to the Bushnell residence. Miss Mary, a gentle blonde young lady was one of the sweetest women I remember. She sponsored young girls' sewing clubs and I still can hemstitch handkerchiefs and tablecloths as well as hem a dress and make buttonholes by hand. One of the special events on sewing day was when we gathered around the clock to see the little bird hop out of his house and cuckoo for us. Always hot chocolate and cookies were served and besides all this, we learned how to conduct ourselves as ladies (which I forget when I get aroused by injustice or high taxes). Miss Ida Slater and her brother, Franklin, lived next door where Councilman Ralph Dolan now resides. Their father was a Baptist minister and Miss Ida was an ardent church worker, tiny and dainty,

who somehow made me think of violets as I watched her trip down the street. Franklin was a druggist who operated a pharmacy in what is now the Masonic Temple.

The next house, demolished when Dr. Gesswein bought the Slater house and made the beautiful garden and lawn, was owned by the Strong family. The Strong girls were not only strong by name but also by nature and were ardent enemies of the demon rum. They were to be admired for their diligence in the work with the WCTU. Miss Helen sponsored many programs of elocution under the direction of Mrs. Gittins, and fine prizes were awarded.

The Conover sisters lived in the stately brick house now owned by the Hutchinson family and I believe it was called Cherry Hall. I don't remember too much about this family, except they had seasonal outfits, beautifully made, one for summer and the other winter.

Now we will retrace our footsteps down the other side of Main Street. Across from the Arrowsmith home lived a brother, William, and his sister, Mary. He was the town mortician (called undertaker in those days), and she kept house for him. Neither ever married. Mr. Arrowsmith was a kind man and I remember watching with awe the black hearse and horses as they slowly moved down Main Street at the head of the funeral procession.

Next door lived a very wonderful lady, Miss Harriet Bray. I think she might have been a school teacher, but at the time I knew her she was organist at the Trinity Episcopal Church. She was another of the faithful librarians. Quite late in life she became an Episcopalian nun and for many years was a teacher in the Islands of the Pacific.

Two more families remain in my memory—the Stillwells and Miss Margaret Terhune. The three Stillwell girls lived with their bachelor brother, Charles, about 100 feet from the present Borough Hall. A lovely white house with pillars on the high porch, it was demolished several years ago. Miss Sarah was a tiny wren whose glasses were always sliding down her nose, but she was so much help in the library, stoking the old pot-bellied stove with wood, helping the little ones find the right

books. On Halloween we made sure we called on the Stillwell girls. They always served us such good cakes and cookies and seemed so pleased to see us.

Miss Margaret Terhune lived in a very large house on the corner of Ravine Drive and Main Street. Her forefathers had been the founders of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, and at her death the beautiful house was demolished and the present bank built on that site. How elegant we thought she was, sitting regally in the rear of her beautiful car, driven by, I believe, one of our local boys, John Woodruff. In those days that was

real "class". The oldtimers of Matawan were indeed sorry when the Terhune home was torn down. It had such beauty and dignity with its wide porch, shaded by huge trees and bordered with blooming shrubs. It was a reminder of the era of gentility, of pride in town and home, and taking time to enjoy friendships.

These are a few of the people who established a way of life in the small village, many different personalities, but all doing their bit to make Matawan a good place to live.

Published January 23, 1974

Bellywopping Down Carriage Factory Hill

I wonder how many kids of today have ever bellywopped down a slippery snow-packed hill? This was one of the pleasures of winter in the "good old days". Ravine Drive at Jackson Street was the starting point and any kind of sled available was used.

At that time, Ravine Drive was called "The Carriage Factory Hill". The reason for this was the building now occupied by the M & M Electric Store was a carriage factory where many magnificent buggies and carriages were manufactured. Directly on the corner was a small shop used by a harness maker, and on the corner of Jackson and Ravine Drive was a brick building where a blacksmith shod all the horses for the entire area.

This building still stands on that site and is used each year at election time as the Republican headquarters. This was the center of the carriage trade, hence

the name "Carriage Factory Hill".

Traffic was very light in those days; just a few horses and sleighs or buggies, so we were not disturbed. Sometimes the older boys would make a bobsled by tying several sleds together and we'd all pile on, many times ending up in the ditch beside the road. Our aim was to go so fast that the momentum of the sled would carry us over the bridge and around the curve. It was a long walk back, and sometimes it was so cold our feet were numb. But anticipation of that glorious ride spurred us on to the top of the hill again.

Every kid should be able to bellywop at least once in his life. I'm 74 and if there was a hill, snow, and a sled available, I'd show you how it's done.

Published September 26, 1973



When Matawan's Wetlands Were Beautiful to Behold

"Preserve the wetlands" has been the by-word of the Environmental Commission as well as nature lovers and persons interested in maintaining open spaces.

Through the years, I have watched the meadows become smaller and cluttered with garbage and debris. It is sad to look back and remember how beautiful they were. Small brooks from the low hills fed the creek and the tall marsh grasses grew profusely along the water. In the summer the pink-and-white mallow flowers dotted the soft green meadows.

In case you don't recognize the name "mallow", it is a bush bearing large blooms similar to the southern hibiscus. They bloomed all the summer months and although they were not good bouquet flowers, they beautified the meadows.

In the fall, the tall brown cattails rose above the golden swamp grass, sentinels standing guard over the muskrats and other wildlife.

The tide rose and fell daily, filling the brooks until one could float a small boat. The creek twisted through the tall swaying meadow grass, caressing the dark rich earth on one side and then slipping across the meadow in a graceful curve to kiss the weeping willow branches reaching down to the water. The tide was swift, and sometimes a small turtle perched on a piece of wood would go sailing by. In the low hanging vines ducks cuddled their young until they were trained to venture into the deeper water.



When the leaves of the oaks and chestnuts on the hills began to change color, the goldenrod on Ravine Drive and Aberdeen Road brought sunshine to the darkening days of fall.

As the cold winds of winter began to blow and a real northeast storm brought high tides, the meadows would become a lake. If it was cold enough, this shallow water would freeze, providing a beautiful skating arena. The winters were colder in those days so skaters were able to skate from above Ravine Drive down to Keyport on the ice formed on the twisting creek. I vaguely remember Raritan Bay freezing over almost to the lighthouse.

A canoe is about the only type boat that can navigate the creek now, but in the early 1900's many good-sized motor boats could make it up to where Buttonwood Manor stands. In fact, before the railroad trestle was built, farmers brought their produce down to a spot near Buttonwood where it was loaded on a large boat and shipped to New York. We all had row boats and considered rowing down the creek and over to Cliffwood Beach all in a day's play.

Below the railroad trestle, where the propeller boats docked, we caught fish and crabs. The soft-shell crabs clung to the piling and it was an exciting game to be the first to find one. The wetlands in their natural state were a joy to behold. I hope they will soon be restored to their original beauty.

Published October 31, 1973

Matawan's First Telephone Switchboard Operators

A program on TV today featured a small New England town where the telephone system is owned by one man. This opened the channels of remembrance, back to the early 1900s when the Bell Telephone Company started its communication system in this area.

The three-position switchboard and the wire chief's mechanism were installed in a brick building on Main Street below the railroad in Matawan. This building was owned by Augustus Close, and he used the lower portion as a feed and coal office. In the center were the magnet board, chief operator's desk, retiring room and the wire chief's room. The upper end was the fun spot, a pool room,

and a lively one. This building has long since gone the route of all the older structures. A small tool factory and a new coal office fill the space.

An area around railroads, saloons, etc., is usually not rated desirable, but although we had a few problems we were never afraid. By "we" I am speaking of the night shift of operators (hours 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.). Although the company served the entire Matawan-Keyport area, the three-position switchboard was adequate and required only two operators at night.

The happy pool-shooting crowd was usually well behaved, but on Saturday nights they would get out of hand. An argument would start and soon, wham! bang! A body would hit the thin wainscoting wall with such force we expected some uninvited guests to come in.

The M.E. Haley Hose Co. firehouse was next door, and the firemen were most generous when they threw a party. We could always depend on a midnight dinner. On one of these special occasions, one of the firemen came over with a tray of ice cream. (Rules and regulations state "No one enters here unless on business.") But we were just young enough to toss aside any such binding rules, so we opened the door and said, "Come in, come in." Before we could sample the ice cream, "knock, knock" again at the door. We quickly pushed the fireman and his goodies into the wire chief's room and cautiously peeked out the door. My co-worker recognized the man as an assistant manager, so we had to open the door. It seemed he had some papers to pick up, but he was a talkative chap who liked the sound of his own voice, so we went through a miserable sweating half-hour before he finally left.

Poor fireman, he had been so quiet. We opened the door to thank him for his silence. What a picture—the poor fellow was sitting on the floor in a pool of melted ice cream sleeping peacefully.

We learned to recognize voices—and although we never met some of the subscribers, we felt we knew them well. Births, deaths, marriages, any events were very special to us as we were the means of communication.

One incident I remember so well. An elderly lady living away out in the country was alone with her very ill

husband. Her family lived in Matawan but didn't answer the phone. The lady was frantic and also quite deaf, so I couldn't make her understand well. After a couple of hours of the constant, hysterical calling (it was very early in the morning), I felt something must be done. At 7 a.m. (that's the time the stores opened in those days) I ran to the hardware store, asked the proprietor to go over to that house and see if by pounding on the door he could rouse the people. This was done and help was soon on the way to the old lady.

The room in which the switchboard was located was called the operating room and was heated by a huge pot-bellied stove. We were the firemen to keep it going. Sometimes the janitor would forget to fill the coal buckets and we would have to brave the dark of the coal sheds to replenish the fuel. In very cold weather we'd bring the cot to sleep beside the stove (two hours relief for each). I remember one night, Edith was sleeping on the cot and I was cat-napping at the board. We both awoke at the same moment to find the room full of smoke, the stove red hot, and the folding screen on fire. We calmly opened up the stove door to cool it, poured water on the screen and went back to sleep.

Service in those days wasn't the click-click speed of the present dial system. A crank in a box on the wall had to be turned several times to contact the operator, who would then ring the number requested. The "voice with the smile" was our motto, and we were called "hello" girls. Sixty years ago this was the best service in communication and it was a pleasure to operate a switchboard. All those voices were our friends and we felt a personal interest in all of them.

Did we "listen in" sometimes? Of course! We were curious, but also by listening we could help in an emergency or accident. There was always a bit of hanky-panky. Maybe 221 was calling 308J too often, or we would know that 63 was meeting 31R at their special rendezvous. But the overall picture was one of the several small communities we served happily and for the benefit of the public. And this you'll never believe: starting pay was \$3 per week. At the end of the first year, I was earning the magnificent

sum of \$6 per week. From then on, a semi-annual raise of \$1 per week. We received extra pay for Sundays and holidays, so at the time of my retirement in 1920, I was bringing home a total pay check of \$36 per week. And I thought I was rich!

Published February 6, 1974

Before Foodtown :

The Old Mudhole

Yesterday, someone asked me if there ever were any other buildings on the spot where Foodtown now operates. This question recalled many happy hours about 60 years ago. For years, this spot had been a weed-covered field, holes filled with water where we made mud pies in the summer and slid on the ice in the winter.

One day something wonderful happened. An amusement company rented the lot and started erecting a merry-go-round. We watched them assemble the machinery and place the beautiful horses on the revolving platform. How impatient we were! So anxious to mount those colorful steeds and circle around, eager to grab the brass ring and enjoy a free ride; we could hardly wait. In this little village of Matawan it was the greatest event of our lives.

All summer we rode the wooden horses and no real cowboy enjoyed sitting in the saddle as much as we did. Up and down, around and around while the music blared out and the steam engine puffed. I'm sure the neighbors grew very tired hearing the same tunes over and over. The two young men who ran the show were jolly and kind, even giving free rides if some little kid didn't have a nickel. How sad we were when the cold weather came and our beautiful merry-go-round was dismantled and taken away. We looked forward to the next year, but they never came back and we were left with memories of an exciting summer when happiness was a ride on that little old merry-go-round.

Published October 24, 1973

The Night Matawan Learned the Terror of War

That never-to-be-forgotten evening was cool with a hint of frost and the promise of the splendor of autumn foliage. My grandparents and I were discussing the war, the one topic of conversation since the sinking of the Lusitania. I was preparing to leave for work at the telephone exchange in Keyport.

"Remember what I say, Susan, this will be a long war," my grandfather said tapping the floor with his cane to emphasize his statement. "The Germans have been getting ready for this for a long time. I wouldn't be surprised if they sneaked in here and tried to blow us up."

"Don't get all upset, Jim," admonished Gram. "At your age there ain't anything you can do about it," and she calmly finished the sock she was knitting, ignoring his snorts of disgust.

I picked up my purse, checked to be sure I had my "midnight snack", patted Gram's white head, a kiss for Gram's wrinkled cheek, and I was off to a slow night at the switchboard. How mistaken I was!

As I opened the door, the quiet of the evening was broken by a thundering explosion which shook the house and brought the dishes clattering from the closet shelves. The force of the blast was so great that the dining room door barely missed my grandfather as it fell into the room.

We were stunned, but bewilderment gave way to reason—it must be the munitions plant at Morgan, about three miles away. We hurried to the street where, by now, our frightened neighbors were gathered. Our fears were confirmed by the flaming sky and acrid smell of dynamite.

"What shall we do? Where can we go?" the frantic people cried as they huddled together, wanting to run, but not knowing where.

In cases of emergency all switchboard operators report for duty. I asked a neighbor to watch out for my grandparents, although Grams, a Civil War veteran, was already giving orders and shouting commands.

"Get to work, Gen," Gram said. "You'll be more useful there and your grandfather will soon have this situation under control." She smiled as she added, "as usual."

When I entered the office, I wondered how any of us could be useful. The switchboard blazed with lights as many persons had left the receivers off the hooks, and this made the operating more confusing. Edith, my co-worker at night, had relieved the nervous and exhausted operators, only to become tired in a few minutes of futile attempts to establish connections.

Navy personnel from a nearby base joined the police force and the firemen who had unsuccessfully been trying to organize the frightened people. Under their competent direction, all were evacuated from their homes; grim-faced men carried the ill and crippled persons while terrified mothers tried to quiet the wailing children. This was the period when the flu epidemic was at its height. As quickly as possible the people were placed in cars, wrapped in blankets and any available clothing, and sent to Beacon Hill, where it was hoped they would be safe.

The air seemed heavy, and the dread of further explosions accelerated the evacuation. Except for the cries of the children and the rumble of the departing cars, it was ominously quiet. People spoke in whispers as though in the presence of the dead.

For several hours, silence reigned, but at 2 a.m. another explosion rocked the building.

"Stay on the job," the chief operator called to us, and we did just that, trying as best we could to establish connections, although our hands trembled and we lost the smile from our voices as blast after blast sent windows crashing. The electricity had been cut off, so we had to use the hand generator to ring numbers.

When morning finally dared to dawn, we looked out on a street littered with fallen trees and broken glass. The trolleys, of course, were not running, so the company hired rigs from Sam Towler's livery stable to take us home.

Assured that there would be no more explosions at nightfall, the weary people returned to what remained of their homes. It would be many days before the

grim statistics of the dead and wounded would be compiled and months to rebuild the homes.

We had all lived through a night of terror, but we had learned in part the tragic effects of war. We had become a closer knit community, working together, suffering together, and as we watched the smoke still rising from the smoldering ruins of the Morgan Munitions Plant, praying together for a quick ending of the war and for eternal peace.

Published January 9, 1974

What Youths did Before the BoobTube Arrived

Children today have so many forms of recreation and amusement—television, radios and automobiles to travel wherever they wish—that they become bored.

In the early 1900's we found our own amusements. The boys and sometimes the girls were expert at playing marbles and many champion games were played in the vacant lots and unpaved roads. Choice migs were traded and especially beautiful shooters prized. I was always ashamed because I couldn't learn to use my thumb to direct the shooter so I never hit the marbles.

Then, too, "Hare and Hounds" was a day-long game. The hounds, after counting one or two hundred, followed the clues the hares placed in their trail, usually a chalked arrow on a building or sidewalk which pointed the route. We ran and walked miles playing this game—today the kids don't even want to walk to school. We learned to swim in the creek and one of our favorite spots was under and by the bridge on Ravine Drive. At high tide we could jump from the bridge.

In the spring we explored the wooded sections of town, especially where the Marc Woods development has been built. We gathered trailing arbutus hiding under the moss and autumn leaves and the white, waxy Indian pipe plants. If you have never seen one, you've missed one of nature's wonders. They are very small

growths perfectly shaped to resemble the Indian peace pipes. Tiny white feathery leaves trim the stem and the bowl is perfect in detail. In the fall, after the first frost, we went chestnut hunting, filling our canvas shot bags (borrowed from my grandfather) with the delicious nuts. It is sad to think that a blight in the chestnut trees has completely ruined them; no more chestnuts in this area.

In the winter, sledding and skating were enjoyed and a special feature was hayrides. Snuggled down in the hay in open sleighs, pulled by horses from Sam Towler's livery stable, we kept warm under the blankets. This was an ideal time for holding hands with the current sweetheart. In those days we were too shy to do any public smooching. I remember one girl, sitting between two rivals, carefully placed the men's hands together, and the whole evening they squeezed each other's hands, blissfully unaware of the fact that the girl had tricked them.

For the very small children (and probably the adults enjoyed them, too), the Italian hand organ grinder and his little dancing monkey brought pleasure to all in the summer. They travelled from town to town and the monkey, very gay in his red uniform and military hat, chattered away as he shook hands with the children and passed his hat for pennies. Once in a while, a man would come to town leading a white dancing bear. He fascinated us, but we kept our distance. In the very early days, as we still see in western TV programs, a medicine show would appear. A horse decorated with gay trappings pulled a covered wagon. The men, and sometimes women, would set up a temporary platform, light torches, dance and sing or do ventriloquist or puppet routines. Between acts they sold their so-called medicine.

To the average youngster of today this probably sounds corny and square, but we loved it and still enjoy the memory of all these events.

Published November 28, 1973

Trailing Arbutus: Spring's Early Pleasure

Many years ago, Matawan was just a little village—one Main Street and a few side lanes leading to the creek and to the then-swiftly running Gravelly Brook.

Some streets were just little pathways in front of the homes that had been built in the very early days. Before 1900, Main Street was just a plank road and riders paid a toll to drive on it with their teams and carriages. These are just a few side remarks to set up the picture of a quiet, friendly little town where most of the population believed in the commandment, "Love thy neighbor". Not too much excitement, perhaps, but they all enjoyed the little pleasures—and this is my story today. Especially in the spring, gathering trailing arbutus was one of the anticipated pleasures.

We were fortunate that Matawan in the early days was surrounded by rolling hills, whose wooded slopes gave protection to all the early spring flowers. Have you ever walked through a hushed, newly-awakened woods, listened to the joyful chirping of the mating birds and heard the silvery trickle of the stream just released from its icy bonds? If you've never taken such a walk, then you have missed one of nature's finest gifts. The moss and last year's leaves are soft to your feet; stop for a moment and lift that little pile of leaves by that rock. Your reward will be a cluster of delicately scented trailing arbutus—tiny pink and white clusters on heart-shaped leaves. So sweet that the scent remains in a room long after the flowers are withered and brown.

Close to the brook we would find the waxy Indian pipe, a peculiar off-white plant which was a miniature replica of the Indian peace pipe. Shaggy white fronds, which resembled feathers, clung to the stem and decorated the bowl of the flower. The Jack in the Pulpit held his everyday services, standing tall and watching over the shy yellow and white violets. The deep purple violet and the pale blue cousin nestled near the hardy laurel bushes. Later, the wide-spreading dogwood trees stretched their branches out to display the creamy white crosslike blossoms. Squirrels, munching on the last of their winter supply of nuts, scolded the inquisitive bluejays.



Palm Sunday or early Easter was "trailing arbutus day". In the vernacular of old times, they were called shad flowers, because I believe, the shad (fish) usually were abundant at that time.

How carefully we searched under the moss and leaves to find the hidden beauties. It seemed life wasn't complete until we had gathered at least one bunch of these woodland treasures. Matawan Avenue and Marc Woods was the choice spot—no vandalism or dumping trash in those days. The woods were hallowed ground, and even though we were young and scatterbrained, we sensed a power behind the creation of this quiet beauty and would not willfully destroy or mar it.

Developers and home seekers have taken over these wooded areas and fields, and many lovely homes have been built. Black-top roads wind around the paths we trod. But there are still a few ravines and brooks and I do hope some of the wild flowers still bloom. To the residents of these areas: If you'd care to search for this early spring flower, stroll down the ravine and turn a few leaves. I'm sure the reward will be well worth the effort. You don't have to be a nature lover to enjoy the scent and beauty of the trailing arbutus.

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room

Genevieve Donnell:

First Lady of Matawan Borough

Genevieve Donnell died last week, and Matawan Borough lost a civic leader, businesswoman, historian, conservationist—and one of the nicest persons who ever lived in the borough.

In a time when too many people are reluctant to give their time to community work, Mrs. Donnell did it all. She served on the Borough Council, the Board of Education, the Chamber of Commerce's board of directors, and the Environmental Commission. She was a charter member of the Matawan Historical Society, and she helped found the Matawan Taxpayers Association.

But listing her memberships and the elected positions she held provides only a glimpse of a woman who was remarkable for her warmth as much as for her devotion to making Matawan Borough a better place to live.

Mrs. Donnell liked people, and if it was possible to disagree with her on an issue, it was impossible to regard her with anything but respect, affection and admiration.

She was approaching her 75th birthday when she decided she wanted to write a newspaper column that would provide a personal history of the borough. It was her first venture as a writer, but she had a warm graceful style which professionals would envy.

People who had never met her felt they knew her because of those columns, and more than a few readers called to say that they looked forward to reading *The Independent* because of Mrs. Donnell's "Matawan Memories".

She continued to write the columns long after she became seriously ill. She conceded very little to the illness which took her life. She would admit to tiring easily but would never mention the pain. She would say that she might not be able to write a column regularly, but until the very end, the column would arrive every week.

It was not surprising, really. No one who knew Genevieve Donnell would have expected her to make concessions to age or illness.

Mrs. Donnell was not reluctant to express her opinions. Mayor Victor Armellino called her a fighter, and she was. The mayor also called her a friend, and she was definitely that.

We will not see another Genevieve Donnell. The sense of loss caused by her death is diminished only by a feeling of gratitude for the opportunity to have known her.

Editorial Opinion by David Thaler
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